

A STUDY OF SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION IN THE AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF OMPRAKASHVALMIKI, BAMA AND BABY KAMBLE

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Abstract:

This article proposed is to analyze the spatial discrimination of Dalits based on various spheres such as attire, education, food, occupation, place, religion and other. In every living community Dalits were segregated spatially. Their living quarters were forcefully secluded to stay away from people of other castes. In this work of OmprakashValmiki *Joothan* (means polluted) food that associated with animals. It portrayed of the struggle between Churha (Dalits) and upper caste Tagas of Barla. Mukherjee says, 'It was speaking of my corner of India, in my first language, Hindi, in a way that no other text had ever spoken to me.' *Joothan* encapsulated the pain of poverty, humiliation, and the atrocities on Dalits. In this autobiography, House structure showed the status of their society. In relation to Dalit autobiography, *Joothan* community of Bhangi had neither a concrete house nor a home. They were living outside of the village; the place was reserved for upper caste people. A high wall and a pond segregated the brick houses in the village from the Chuhrebasti, or cluster of shanties. Upper castes men and women of all ages came and sat on the edge; and saw the private parts exposed. He said "There was much strewn everywhere, the stench was so overpowering that one would choke within a minute. The pigs are wandering in narrowing lanes, naked children, dogs, daily fights, this was the environment of my childhood." (Valmiki 45).

Keywords —

Introduction:

In the memory of OmprakashValmiki, the days of the rainy season came as metaphor of 'living hell.' The lanes of the Dalit Mohalla had filled with mud which was getting mixed with the pigs' waste the huts began to stink which hovered all-round the mud huts of the Dalits. Flies and mosquitoes had multiplied their numbers and had power to turn life days and nights into nightmares. The days of the rain were such that they came in the memory as illustrative account of the idea of truth of the Dalits. He wrote with all the clarity at his command that, 'Literature can only imagine hell. For us rainy season was a living hell. This terrible suffering of village life has not even been touched upon by the epic poets of

Hindi. What a monstrous truth that.' (Valmiki 116)

It is said that the occupation is the identity of its society. In relation to the *Joothan*, the work of Bhangi was mostly engaged to clean the latrines of upper class society. Traditionally, Chuhras were cursed to sweep in the fields during harvests, carrying death-news and perform other physical labor for all upper caste people, including the Tyagi and Brahmins. During his childhood, the entire family worked hard including cleaning, agricultural work and general work, yet they did not manage to get two decent meals a day, not the least because they often did not get paid for their labor and instead the labors were abused.

Related work:

The poor Dalits should work in the field of Tagas in the hot sunshine in order to earn food and grains for survival of life. Many of the harvesters were the Chuhras and Chamars. They wore scanty cloths and their wages were not given properly; rather, they got whatever Tagas gave including leftovers. In addition to this, Dalit women were assigned to clean the cow dung which was more difficult in winters. During the rainy season there was no work for them, however they were living in poverty for a quite long time. They were doing anything which was including harvesting lentils, cutting shelves of wheat in the midday sun, and transporting them via bullock carts. Each person got one out of twenty one parts produced about two pounds of wheat as wages. For the rest of time they were in the cowshed, they got wages in the name of grain and a leftover roti each day (made by mixing the flour with the husk since it is for the Chuhras), and at times scraps of leftover from their employer's plates or Joothan.

In *The Prison We Broke*, Baby Kamble related that in Maharashtra, Dalits had to do only menial works. Caste system was much gigantic in magnitude, more widely spread in time scale, yet it was difficult to pin point and comprehend easily. Mahars revolved around tragedy of poverty, hunger and tales of lesser human beings. ArunKamblere remembered, "The labor of the entire family was paid for in the form of bhakin (pieces of bread), which the yesker (a Mahar bonded labor whose work was to collect food at caste Hindu houses in the evening) had to go and collect from house to house every evening" (Kamble74-75)

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning

the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews: 4:10) in *Karukku*, Bama worked in a school more than five years. In their convent all kind of people were studying including Dalits. But they did not treat all students as the same, but they were showing partialities and discriminations among Dalits. Bama faced caste discrimination in the Christian institution when she completed her training and became a nun.

Dalits students studied in Christian institution school, Dalit children were used for menial works: "In that school, attend by pupils from very wealthy households, people of my community were looking after all the jobs like sweeping the premises, sweeping and washing the classrooms, and cleaning out the lavatories."(Bama 110) and in the convent, they spoke very disparagingly about low-caste people. They spoke as if they did not consider low people as human beings. This makes Bama to convert into Christianity and became a nun.

Author's information:

Each pariah family was attached to Naicker family as bonded labor. Bama's work spoke to this statement as she described the servitude with which her family members were bound to the upper-caste families they worked for, including beseeching obedience they had to show to them. "All the time I went to work for the Naickers and I knew I should not touch their goods or chattels; I should never come close to where they were. I should always stand away to one side. These were their rules, I often felt pained and ashamed. But there was nothing that I could do," (Bama 113) she writes of her experience working for a Naicker household in high school. "To this day, in my village, both men and women can survive only through hard and incessant labour."(Bama 114)

In Joothan, the scout teacher Rameshchand had to go to the city

for a district level meeting. When Omprakash was asked by his scout teacher, he said you must come in a neat and well pressed uniform. He tried his level best to come up his expectation. Up to this time he had never worn and ironed his clothes. Whenever he saw the starched and freshly washed clothes of the Tyagi boys, he had his own wish to wear such clothes. When he went to Dhobi's shop to get his uniform ironed and the washer man saw him and shouted. 'Abey, Chuheka where do you think you are going? Ompraksah said, Indeed to have the uniform ironed.' The reply of the Dhobi tormented his heart as he "not wash the clothes of the Chura-Chambhars. Nor do we iron them. If we iron your clothes, then the Tagas won't get clothes washed us. We will lose our Roti." (Valmiki 143) This reply of washer man stunned the narrator and he became speechless. He felt that one can even become free the torture of poverty and physical punishment but one can never escape from one's caste.

Here woman Dailt writer Bama also spoke of the humiliation which she experienced in her high school, being Dalit and poorer than her classmates. What struck me, in particular, is the symbolic importance of clothing as a marker of social capital that she wrote of. She described a college party that she did not attend because she could not afford to buy a new Saree, hiding in the bathroom until it was over. While education spaces were supposed to be emancipate, free of all markers of identity and privilege, equalizing spaces, they were anything.

In *The Prisons We Broke*, Baby Kamble described the broken picture of Dalit community through the names of Dalits like Kondakaku is the name given to Mahar woman which means Dust lady. Bhikabi was yet another name given to Mahar woman. The meaning of this word

was begging lady. It shows that Dalits are called by names denoting their action and behavior. A name was like degraded was the name of another man. Here, Dhondu meant Jungali man a meaningful names. Her autobiography had depicted a realistic picture of Dalit community in which she was raised. She had recorded that the Mahars were so ignorant that could not know whether a child suffered from fever was alive or dead. Kamble herself was declared to be dead when she was two and a half years old because she was not feeling well and had fallen unconscious. She was about to be buried. However, one of her elderly relatives were noticed that Kamble was still alive and that was how she got saved. Kamble said that any such alive but unconscious and unfortunate children were buried in those days just because of a lack of awareness among the Mahars.

Religion had been playing a vital role in the life of Dalits. It was very difficult to adhere the traditional hierarchical hindu system of worship and their worship were not linked to god and goddess. There was a deep faith in their Kule Devi who led them to believe that a desire boon asked of her will be unfailingly fulfilled. Sometimes the fulfilment of the boon is involved extended rituals to please god or goddess. The life of Bhangi community revolved continuously around the rituals to please the goddess and offering thanks giving for that had been granted. Most of Dalits in India including Bhagi Mocha-Chamars and Jatav worshipped the same deities as the Hindu religion. Mocha-Chamars worshipped saint Raidas where Bhangiworshipped all deities of Hindu. There are different gods and goddess of upper caste and those of the scheduled castes. Here Valmiki wrote that Bangai community had its own god and goddess, Zampdo and Zampdi also called to by the name of Sikotar Mata-goddess. In addition they worshiped Hadaki Mata-

goddess, Meladi Mata-goddess, Khodiya Mata-goddess and Kalka Mata-goddess. In BhangiValmikicomunites in Khambhattaulk they worshiped BhathijiMaharaj.

Discussion:

Each god and goddess was worshipped for special purposes. Within the entire group of deities, there was pure and impure goddess. The goddess to whom they offer vegetarian offerings (rice and ghee) were pure to those to whom they offer non-vegetarian offerings (chicken and mutton) were impure. This showed the extension of hierarchy within religion even divinity reflected the ideology of Varna, with its concepts of purity and impurity that had permeated all aspects of thought and action including even the world of spirituality and religion.

In *Joothan*, the Bhangi community had worshiped God Kalwa, Hari Singh and others. Goddess Madaran was among the most important ones. Though Indian Dalit represented to Hindus religion but they did not worship Hindu god or goddess. At Janmastami- birth ceremony of lord festival of light was Hindu festival where Hindu festival in which Hindu people worshipped the goddess Laxmi. Instead of goddess Laxmi, Bhangi people had worshipped and afforded piglet to the goddess Madaran. Thus the Bhangi community had its own god and goddess. Through this Dalits had by Hindu culture, they had created their own Gods and Goddesses.

This idea was also discussed in *The Prison We Broke*. The Mahars were leading their lives in ignorance and abject poverty. They were not aware of the human existences as such. They would

not dare to go against the social norms and challenge the caste Hindu. They were greatly superstitions and obeyed their oppressions. Hindu religion and gods considered Mahars as dirt. Mahar community upheld the Hindu principles and they thought of gods with great sanctity.

Conclusion;

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Judging a man by his potential is acceptable, but judging a man on invisible things suchlike caste which cannot be decided by the child, yet it will suffer till the end. Especially in Hinduism, even the sacred texts itself talk about the caste discrimination and insists following the norms, irrespective of the intolerable cruelty behind it. Though we are technologically attained some mastery but still we use human being as scavenger; it ought to be a Dalit. Even many schools in the villages where the high caste people is dominant, the teachers themselves force the Dalit students to clean the school toilets, places in and around the school premises; few teachers even use the students to clean their house. Apart from the educational sphere, Dalits are manhandled by the upper caste people without any reason, just because they are Dalits, they are victim of upper caste hegemony. This article explains the victimization of Dalit and various grounds such as food, clothe, place, religion and occupation

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